

Duplicate

STATEBURG.

on
The High Hills of Santee.

The village, or town, of Stateburg must now be classed among the dead towns of South Carolina. Not dead in the sense of being merely non-progressive, but as practically extinct. During the eighties and for a part of the nineties it still prided itself upon having the local post office of that name, and there were usually two or three small stores open, the principal among these being the store owned and conducted for many years by the eminently respectable colored family, the Ellisons. The last named store was the last place of business, so far as the writer is informed, to close its doors in this ancient village.

The village of Stateburg, however, was by no means all of Stateburg. On the contrary, when we speak of Stateburg we mean "The Neighborhood" of that name; and the village, or rather the post office, was only one of the two links which served to connect the people of the Neighborhood together. The other link was the Episcopal church.

The Stateburg neighborhood is situated upon the High Hills of Santee and, as the hills were there before the neighborhood, it would be fitting to give a brief description of the former before proceeding to describe the latter. The following description is taken from "Mills' Statistics of South Carolina."

"The high hills of Santee are the greatest natural curiosity in the District" (Sumter). "They are a spur from the sand hills of the middle country, which are our secondary

mountains. The former take their rise a little above Jack's creek, about nine miles north of Nelson's ferry, and form that fine body of brick mould land in the Richardson settlement. After continuing about eight miles they become suddenly sand hills, giving rise to three delightful streams of water, and affording healthy summer retreats to the planters below and a little above Manchester. At the end of eleven miles they again become red land, which continues to Buck creek, above Statesburg, nine miles. These hills, to this point, appear to hang over the Wateree swamp, but now they diverge and turn to the northeast, with one ridge in the middle forming a backbone; breaking off into hills toward the Wateree, and sloping off gradually toward Black river. At Beach creek the hills again become sandy, which gradually increases to Bradford's spring (fifteen or sixteen miles). A little above this place they join the sand hills of the middle country. Round Statesburg the high hills of Santee are elevated about 300 feet above the bed of the river, and command in two points a view of 30 miles. These lands are here generally laid off in small tracts for gentlemen's seats, and afford a pure air and water; but the neighborhood of Bradford's springs is dry and elevated, and considered the most healthy. These hills, now generally called the Santee hills, give rise to all the head branches of Black river, and to many creeks which empty into the Wateree. They slope towards the former, and with the valley between them and the latter, afford the best pine lands in the state, thickly settled. The sand hills of the middle country are thought to be of little value; but they furnish

salubrious seats for the planters on the rivers. Their height, and the pure dry air condense the vapors passing from the sea and low country upwards, which afterwards descend in showers, refreshing the crops and fertilizing the lands."

Seated upon these delightful hills, Stateburg has always enjoyed a well deserved reputation as a health resort, and, as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and therefore, as the proof of a health resort ought to show in the longevity of its inhabitants, we quote further from Mills' Statistics, to prove that the inhabitants of this section do, or at any rate many of them did, up to the time that he published his book in 1826, live to a good old age. Mr. Mills himself quotes from the historian, Dr. Ramsay, in giving the following instances of longevity, which, he says, "are more common in this region than others."

"Mrs. Jackson, a widow lady, at the high hills of Santee, a native of Virginia, aged 110; Rose Maples, 17 miles from Statesburg, 102; Mary James, from Maryland, 70 years resident near Statesburg, 102; Mrs. Lane, near Statesburg, who, on Sundays, walked 10 miles to church, attended by her descendants to the fifth generation, 95; Mr. and Mrs. Nettles, ten miles from Statesburg, born in Virginia, in the same month of the same year, married 72 years, had, in 1803, 134 descendants, healthy, cheerful, and good humored to the last, resided in Carolina 30 years, each of them, 92; Rev. Jeremiah Ream, a preacher after he was 90 years old, died in the district, 1797, aged 100. Mrs. Haynsworth, high hills of Santee, 87. There are some

now living, between 80 and 90; but few attain a greater age than 70. The venerable Gen. Sumter, the patriot and soldier of the revolution, still lives in the enjoyment of health and the full exercise of all his faculties, at the advanced age of 90."

General Sumter, I may add, did not die until June 1, 1832, in the 98th year of his age.

In the foregoing extract it is of interest to note that in a number of the instances given, the person named is referred to as having been a "native of Virginia," or "born in Virginia" etc., and this leads us to the matter of the original settlement of the High Hills, and on this point the historian of our state, General Edward McCrady, is my authority. He gives the following description of it (South Carolina under Royal Government, page 137):

"The battle of Culloden, in April, 1746, led to the removal of many families from Scotland to America, and inducements were held out to these to come to South Carolina. The 'High Hills of Santee,' as the rolling lands between Lynch's creek and the Wateree, in what is now Sumter county, were called, were set aside for them; but these exiles were drawn by contrary winds into the Cape Fear, and thence a part of them crossed and settled higher up in what is now Darlington county, the rest taking up their abode in North Carolina. . . . The High Hills of Santee were granted to emigrants from Virginia, who about the same time came down into the province."

In the recently published "Biography of Richard Furman," edited and published by Professor Harvey T. Cook, in 1913--- the anonymous author is supposed by Professor Cook to have been Wood Furman, son of Richard Furman, and the date of the writing to have been 1826---we find the following account of the early settlers in this region.

"In the interior of South Carolina society was yet in its unformed elements. Literary institutions did not exist, books were scarce, and most places were destitute of a settled ministry. Notwithstanding these and other privations, many who had been habituated to a better state of things were induced to seek in new settlements health and rural plenty with the prospect of future independence and a more improved condition of society. And there was among the people generally a mass of unlettered sense, which liberty and the stimulus it offered to exertion strengthened and a habit of frequent intercourse diffused, producing in no mean degree a just estimate of men and things. The High Hills of Santee, from their central situation, the quantity of fertile land in their vicinity, their proximity to a navigable river, and the healthfulness which characterized them, attracted numerous emigrants. These were mostly from Virginia, generally industrious and enterprising but illiterate, and brought with them the habits then prevalent in parts of that state which ~~was~~ ^{were} not favored with religious institutions. They were addicted to sports and social gaiety, commonly assembling at each other's houses and closing the labors of the week with dancing. In addition to these another class began before the revolution to remove from the lower country into this

region, possessing more refined and correct habits and greater advantages of education."

Candor compels me to admit that the addiction of the inhabitants of this neighborhood to "sports and social gaiety" and especially to dancing, continued long after they had ceased to be illiterate, and, in fact, still obtains there at the present time!

This Richard Furman, however, from whose biography I have just quoted, was neither a Virginian nor from the low country. He was born in the town of Esopus, in the state of New York, on October 9, 1755, and a few months after his birth he was removed to South Carolina. His father, Wood Furman, had procured an extensive tract of valuable land on the border of the Wateree river (it lay on both sides of Beach creek, a tributary of the Wateree), and there he took his family, but after a short residence there he moved his family to the seacoast and continued to reside in the low country until May, 1770, when the family removed to the High Hills and settled on the land before mentioned, which was situated within two miles of the village of Stateburg, and was intersected by the road ^{now} passing from that village to Columbia. Young Richard Furman joined the Baptist church in his sixteenth year and soon became a minister of that denomination. He was probably the most influential and distinguished member of that communion in this state. He was greatly interested in the cause of education, and it is stated in Dr. Cook's biography (page 89) that it was through his influence that the South Carolina college came to be presided over

by its first president, Dr. Jonathan Maxcy. Furman university was named for him. Young Furman was also an ardent patriot, and everywhere he went he endeavored so successfully, by his prayers and eloquent appeals, to reassure his countrymen in their resistance to Great Britain that Cornwallis is said to have remarked that he "feared the prayers of that godly youth more than the armies of Sumter and Marion." He was afterwards located in Charleston for many years, in charge of the Baptist church there, where he enjoyed the personal friendship of General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, who preceded him to the grave in 1825 by only eight days.

Traditions are notoriously untrustworthy and by some historians they are utterly abhorred; nevertheless they are often interesting, and sometimes they have all the earmarks of probability. I feel emboldened, therefore, to insert here a tradition concerning the settlement of two of these Virginia pioneers in Stateburg which has recently come to my attention.

There is now living in Columbia a descendant of ^{Joe} Jack ~~and~~ Joe Holliday, ^{He and his brother Jack, were} two Virginians who settled in Stateburg before the Revolution. ^{descendants} His name is Mr. George P. Romanstine, son of Mrs. John Romanstine. He told me in 1914 that the tradition in his family is that Jack and Joe Holliday were contractors from Virginia who were on their way to Charleston looking for work in their line. They were traveling with a wagon train, and Jack was sent on ahead to look for a good place to camp. At Stateburg he found the usual crowd congregated, playing cards, drinking

whiskey, fighting chickens, etc., and the crowd set out to have some fun with him. One Tindal was deputized to act for the crowd. He told Holliday that it was customary for a stranger to show his "pass" or his manhood. Holliday replied that he had no pass, and explained his business--- looking for a camp site. He was then told that he would have to show his manhood. He replied that he could not fight the crowd. Tindal told him that he (Tindal) would represent the others. Holliday asked if there was no way to avoid the difficulty. Upon being told "no," he said "all right, then, I am in a hurry. Let's get through with it." A ring was drawn, coats were stripped off, and they fell to. Holliday knocked his opponent out, was offered a job of contracting by a bystander then and there, and he and his brother settled there and did not go on to Charleston.

This tradition may be another myth awaiting destruction by the hammer of some iconoclast, but, at any rate, it is certain that there were Hollidays living in this vicinity shortly after the Revolution, although none of that name has lived in Stateburg within the memory of the writer. The first United States census (1790) gives the names of John Holliday and Mary Holliday as heads of families then living in "Camden District, Claremont County." Claremont county was later changed to Sumter county.

Mills mentions as among the most noted of the Virginians who settled in this region, General Sumter, General Richardson, and Colonel James. General Richardson, however, did not settle on the High Hills, but farther down toward

the Santee river, in what is now Clarendon county. The Colonel James referred to was not a member of the well known family of that name which settled in the township of Williamsburg, on Black river, along with the Witherspoons, Bradleys, Friersons and many others. This Williamsburg settlement was made up almost entirely of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, for whom Williamsburg township was set apart. It was settled about 1730 to 1734. The Williamsburg family of James, however, did afterwards also become identified with the Stateburg neighborhood through the removal there of William Dobein James in 1795. He was later, in 1802, elected a chancellor of this state.

During the war of the Revolution these hills were, from time to time, in the occupation of both the British and the American armies, and many references to this effect are to be found in McCrady and in the other historians of that stirring period. In one place McCrady tells us (South Carolina in Rev. 1780-1783, page 343), that "He" (General Greene) "established a camp in the salubrious and delightful region of the High Hills of Santee on a plain at that time known as James Oldfield's, afterwards the plantation of Colonel John Singleton. There he went into repose during the extreme heat of the season, while Sumter and Marion watched below."

The "James Oldfield's" mentioned in McCrady, evidently means James' old field," as this is the way it is given in Johnson's Life of Greene (page). There seems to be some difference of opinion as to the precise location of this camp, but the better view seems to be that it was

located on the plantation now known as "The Oaks," owned by Screven Moore, and situated about half way between the village of Wedgefield and the Episcopal church of the Holy Cross, at Stateburg. The place formerly belonged to the Singletons and its earliest name was "James Hill." I have this on the authority of Mr. William James Rees, who is a descendant of William James, the emigrant from Virginia. At any rate, whether we have correctly located this camp or not, it was, according to Judge Johnson, a "Camp of Repose on the High Hills of Santee," for Greene's army, where "Both officers and men felt the vigor return as soon as they inhaled the pure breezes." (Greene's Life of Greene, Vol. III, 335.)

Prior to the surrender of Charleston to the British on May 12, 1780, Governor Rutledge and a part of his council left the city, and thereafter, for nearly two years, he accompanied the armies. We are informed in the sketch of Chief Justice Rutledge, in O'Neill's Bench & Bar of South Carolina (page 23), that the then Governor Rutledge issued his first proclamation on August 5, 1781, from the High Hills of Santee. He was undoubtedly at that time with Greene's army on the High Hills. (See McCrady, South Carolina in Rev. 1780-1783, page 419.)

In his "History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 etc. in North America," Colonel Tarleton, at page 101, speaks of going from Black river district to Camden "by the main road over the Santee Hills," and the map in the front of the volume shows clearly that the road taken was the main road from Charleston to Camden, which passes directly through

the village of Stateburg. The old Anderson home, known as "Hill Crest," still standing in the village, is the only structure there, so far as the writer is informed, which dates back to the Revolution. It is said to have been the headquarters of Lord Cornwallis and also of General Greene, when the British and the American army respectively happened to be in that vicinity. The owners of the house at the time of the Revolution were Thomas Hooper and his wife Mary (Heron) Hooper. Their niece and adopted daughter, Mary Jane Mackenzie, married Dr. William Wallace Anderson, from Montgomery county, Maryland, and ever since then the old place has been occupied by the Andersons.

About a mile from the village and almost directly back of the Episcopal church stands "The Ruins," a lovely old place now the home of Mrs. James Pinckney. The tradition is that the name of this place, "The Ruins," was given to it because the present house is located upon the site of the original home of General Thomas Sumter which was burned by the British under Colonel Tarleton during the Revolution. It is not entirely certain that this tradition is correct, for General Sumter owned thousands of acres of land in this section of country and seems to have had a mania for building homes for himself. He "built houses all the way up to South Mount, fifteen miles north of Stateburg," and any one of these might have been the one burned by Tarleton. In the writer's opinion, however, the evidences point almost conclusively to "The Ruins" as the place where his burned home was located. Mr. R. J. Brownfield, who died recently in Stateburg at a very advanced age, and who had lived in the neighborhood all

his life, wrote to me, in 1911, that General Sumter's "first house at Stateburg was burned in April, 1780, by the British."

The following description of the burning of General Sumter's house is taken from "Charleston, the Place and the People," by Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, of Charleston, published in 1907. Mrs. Ravenel lived for many years in Stateburg at "Acton," which was situated within a quarter or a half mile of the "Home Place," then occupied by Mr. Sebastian Sumter, a grandson of General Sumter, and she undoubtedly saw Mr. Sumter very frequently, and I have no doubt that this description of the burning of his grandfather's home was given to her by the grandson and is therefore probably correct. I have also been informed by Mr. Wallace Sumter, the great-grandson of General Sumter, that the description is correct. (Charleston, the Place and the People, page 284):

"The Tories, zealous in their well-paid devotion to the Crown, and sustained by the power of England, were numerous; they rose, turned upon their neighbors, and especially in the middle and upper parts of the State, the war assumed the most terrible fratricidal character. What Sir Henry's proclamations had begun, the outrages of his officers enhanced, and then in an evil hour for themselves they burned down the home of Sumter at Claremont, Craven County; and raided the parish of St. John's Berkeley, the birthplace of Francis Marion.

"Sumter and Marion had both been accidentally absent from the siege of Charles Town, but Sumter, hearing that Governor Rutledge was on his way to North Carolina, left home to join him only a few hours before Tarleton (who had nearly captured Rutledge himself) reached his place.

"The Sumters had been in great domestic trouble. They had recently lost several children, and Mrs. Sumter, who belonged to the soldierly Cantey family, had been smitten by paralysis. When the British arrived, she and a niece were the only persons in the house; the only remaining child, a little boy of twelve, having rushed off with the best horse to hide it in a hollow of the hills.

"The house, stable, and barn were soon plundered of every desirable thing, and were then set on fire. The young lady appealed to the soldiers to save her utterly helpless aunt, and two of them, lifting her in her invalid chair, carried her into the yard and set her down to watch the blazing house.

"Struck with her composure and fortitude one man, more compassionate than his fellows, brought her a ham from her own smoke-house, telling her that he gave it to keep her from starving; and hid it under the cushions of her chair, lest his comrades should take it away. This was the sole pity shown. The little boy, who had safely concealed his horse, climbed a tree and saw the burning of his home. The place, near the present Stateburg, keeps the name of "The Ruins" to this day.

"Sumter, commissioned by the Governor, first as colonel, afterward as general, became, according to Lord Cornwallis, 'the greatest plague' of the British in the South. His fiery courage, and willingness to fight against any odds, gained him the sobriquet of the "Game Cock."